Building Strong Campus Partnerships

CAMPUS
Technical Assistance and Resource Project

MS Coalition Against Sexual Assault
partnered with Bent-Goodley LLC

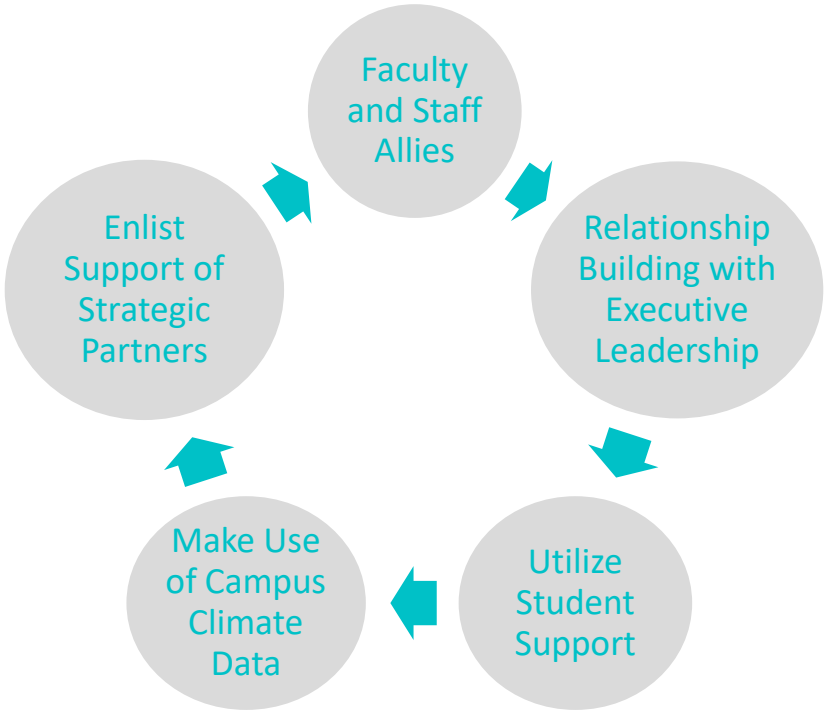
Seven Elements for Strong Campus Partnerships

We can begin with targeting key campus leaders – including executives, administrators, faculty, staff, and student leaders. Endeavor to involve formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders may have the authoritarian position to create systems change. Informal leaders can influence changemakers on campus. The goal of building relationships and alliances with these individuals is for them to become champions of interpersonal violence work on campus. Plan to be available to invest long-term in these relationships. Executive leadership can often change so ensuring that you are intentional about engaging campus leadership on a consistent basis is key. Do not consider it an offense that you may have to justify your work. Instead approach these alliances as an opportunity to inform, educate, and advocate.

Engaging Campus Leadership

Engaging campus leadership is critical for the Campus Advocate. It requires five areas of focus: (1) building relationships with faculty and staff allies, (2) building relationships with executive leadership, (3) utilizing student support, (4) making use of campus climate check data, and (5) enlisting the support of strategic partners.

Figure 1: Engaging Campus Leadership



Strengthening relationships with student leadership helps to build student support and ensure that you have your pulse on what is occurring on campus. Having this knowledge allows you to be more effective as you become more of an asset to the institution.

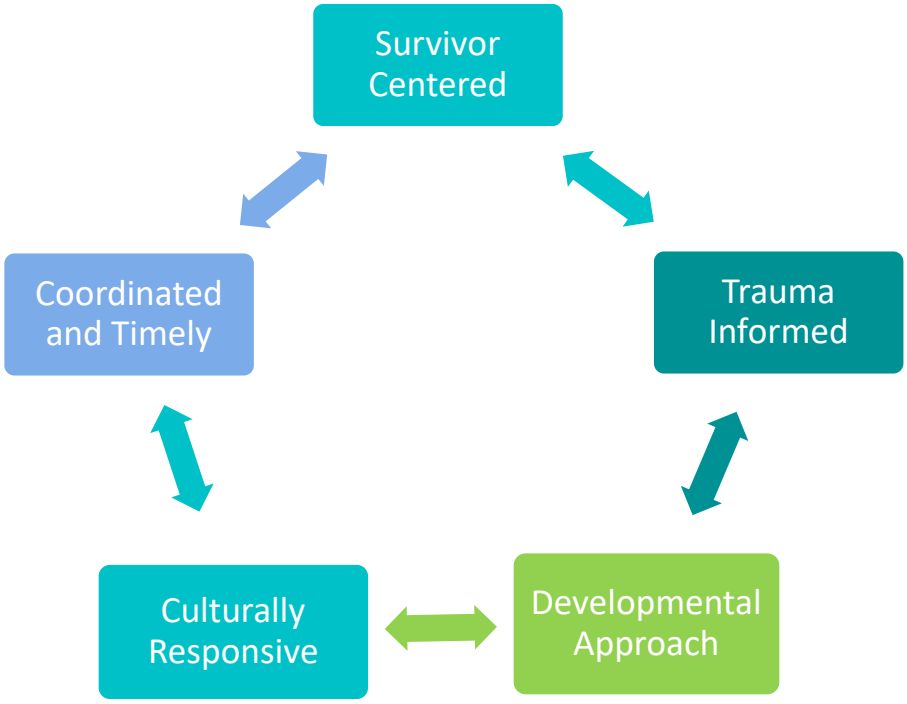
Relationships with community partners can bring positive attention to the Victim Services program. Be purposeful about sharing how your community partnerships benefit the institution. For example, offering trainings to community partners demonstrates how your campus is contributing to making the larger community safer and more informed. This work is an advantage to colleges and universities that place an emphasis on being ready partners in the community.

Finally, the campus climate check provides data that explains the need for campus advocacy. This data can identify needs, trends, and challenges that may be addressed and inform campus leadership of the necessity of the campus advocate in solving specific issues on campus.

Developing Guiding Principles

It is important to develop guiding principles to help unify campus functioning. Campuses should develop their own guiding principles that link into the life of the institution. The guiding principles that should be endorsed across campuses include: (1) being survivor centered, (2) being trauma informed, (3) having a developmental approach, (4) being culturally responsive, and (5) having coordinated and timely responses.

Figure 2 : Guiding Principles



The guiding principles provide the campus with an agreed upon shared approach to how the campus perceives and responds to interpersonal violence. The process of developing these guiding principles is instructive and useful for relationship building, discussion of issues, and ensuring understanding of expectations. Here are examples of specific guidelines that should be staples for how a campus responds to interpersonal violence.

Survivor-Centered: The Campus community directs its actions on the needs and wishes of the survivor. In this role, the survivor's needs are prioritized to be the focal point for decision-making and action. Services offered should be compassionate and judgement-free to ensure that they are motivated by the needs of survivors and are accessible.

Trauma Informed: The Campus is committed to a trauma-informed approach. As outlined by SAMHSA (2014), the Campus Community recognizes the widespread nature of trauma, can identify the signs and symptoms associated with trauma, knows how to properly respond within the context of the unit and their role, and makes a conscious effort to build policies and practices that do not retraumatize the student. Each unit should understand its role in rendering a trauma-informed response.

Developmental Approach: The Campus demonstrates awareness of the different thoughts, emotional maturity, and behaviors connected to the stages of life for students on campus. As a campus community, awareness of the different developmental stages and experiences of students on campus is not to justify poor behavior to reinforce healthy adulthood. However, strategies, centered around the developmental stages of the students with recognition of their strengths and a conscious effort to be non-judgmental of behaviors are designed to be associated within the stages.

Culturally Responsive: The Campus community demonstrates knowledge and awareness of individual and collective identities, acknowledge and address stereotypes and biases, and honors diversity on campus. In this role it is important to not take a culturally blind approach – thinking that interpersonal violence is the same for all communities. Instead, recognize diversity and be willing to investigate the customs, traditions, language, and values of diverse groups while also building skillsets to engage them positively and effectively.

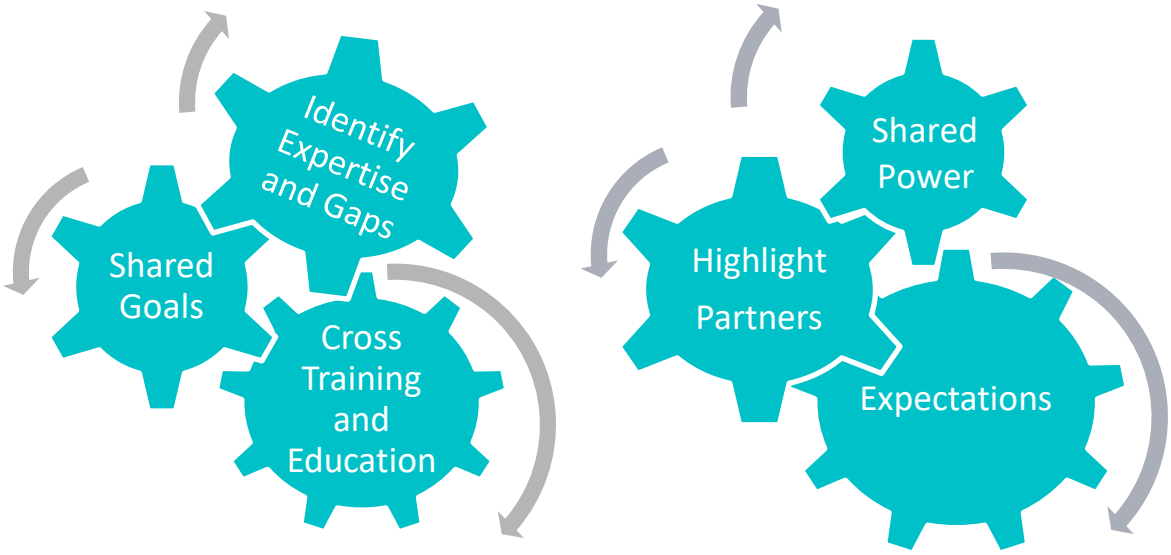
Coordinated and Timely: The Campus community is committed to providing coordinated responses to ensure an integrated and comprehensive approach. In addition, there is a commitment to provide timely services recognizing the nature of being both thorough and responsive to students. Having this commitment provides a level of transparency and accountability that builds trust with students.

Emphasizing Campus Coordination

It is essential to emphasize the value of campus coordination. Proficiency in this area is profoundly important for success. Campus coordination helps to identify shared goals and objectives in the integration of work across components. Major areas of campus coordination include: (1) shared power, (2) expectations, (3) identification of expertise, gaps, and shared goals, (4) highlighting partners, and (5) cross training and education.

Campus coordination should begin with determining roles for each campus entity. It is important to know who does what to avoid unnecessary or problematic duplication of effort. It is also helpful for seeing how all the parts work together for the success of the whole. This helps each team member feel valued and knowledgeable of where their office fits into the bigger picture. It reinforces the importance of shared power in accomplishing bigger goals. Further, it highlights expertise in the groups as well as gaps that the body may need to address. For example, identifying who is not at the table will assist in making sure there is representation of different voices and experiences across the campus community. Once recognized, there is an opportunity to engage this group(s) to include diverse voices.

Figure 3: Campus Coordination



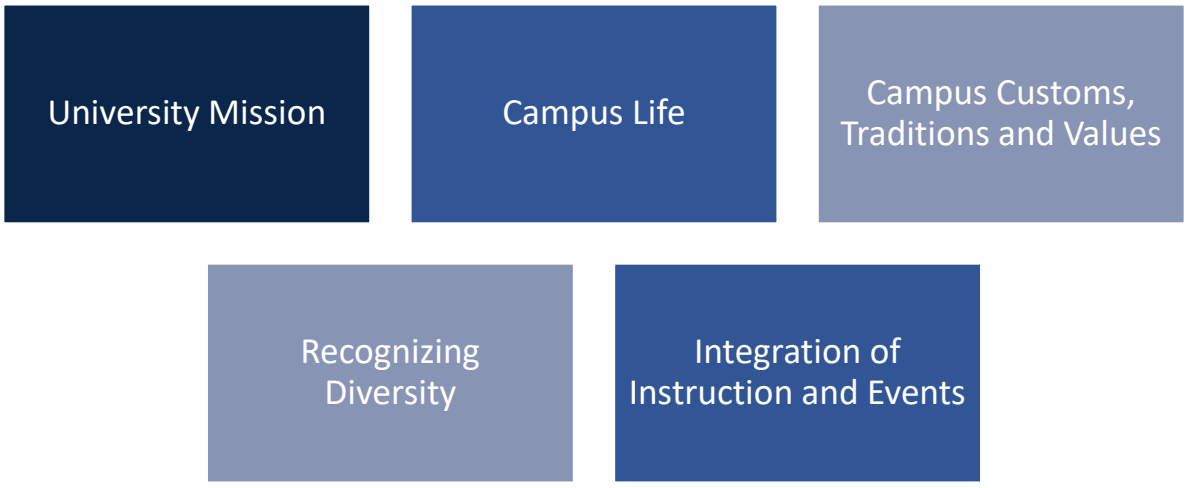
Campus coordination should include cross-training to make sure everyone's knowledge is growing, and skills are being shared. It provides opportunities to listen to questions and hear the thoughts of interdisciplinary team members in determining how separate groups process the same issues. Hearing these diverse viewpoints can build understanding between units and honor the unique value they bring.

Finally, highlighting the contributions of different team members is critical to promoting and sustaining success. While working within these broad spectrums you may face resistance, however, do not personalize the resistance. The process of creating and establishing your team is important and requires patience and consistency. Opportunities for growth and relationship building is extended when there is resistance.

Understanding Campus Culture

Understanding the campus culture is also key to being successful as a Campus Advocate. Areas of campus culture include: (1) university mission, (2) campus life, (3) campus customs, traditions, and values, (4) recognizing diversity, and (5) integration of education and events.

Figure 4: Campus Culture



Starting with the mission of the institution, consider how the value of the institution shapes the work of your program and position. Linking the institutional mission with victim advocacy can help with buy-in, sustainability, and assist stakeholders in understanding their role in the work of the Campus Victim Services Program.

Along with the mission, consider the customs and traditions of the campus. For example, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) often view homecoming as a major cultural event on campus bringing together current students, alumni, and other stakeholders. A Campus Advocate at one of these institutions might consider how to partner around homecoming events to promote awareness and education.

In addition to campus customs, it is also important to understand campus life. Being clear about campus life drives decisions on when and where to host campus events. It might also help determine how to frame and discuss interpersonal violence (IPV) issues on campus as well as how the students are viewing the topic. For example, if the campus culture has a focus on social justice issues, it is important for the Campus Victim Services program to connect the issue to social justice as part of its programming and focus. Having educational efforts that are part of classroom instruction, orientation events, Greek life events, and athletics are all key to include in programming initiatives. The life and culture of the campus is, therefore, significant to identify and understand.

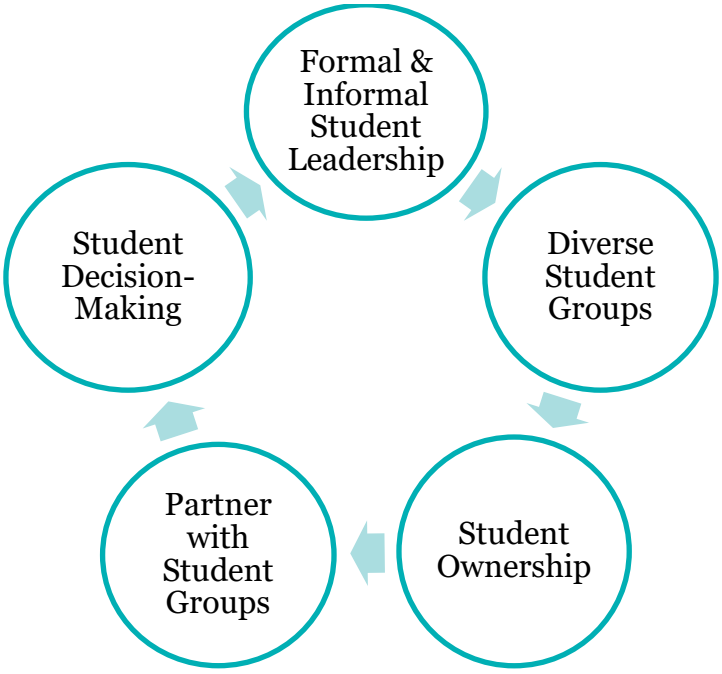
Campus culture is not homogeneous. There are diverse cultures to include, for example, diverse racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, sexual orientation and gender identities, persons with differing abilities, and religious groups. These groups can also include international students, non-traditional students, as well as first generation, graduate, and professional students. The Victim Services Program must consider these dissimilar groups and their developmental needs in offering diverse approaches and programming through traditional methods of delivery while also incorporating other communication methods including, but not limited to, technology and social media. It is necessary for Victim Services Program to ensure that their approach, educational efforts, and emphasis includes knowledge and competency as well in working with these various groups.

Campus life also includes faculty and staff. Finding ways to include faculty and staff in bystander campaigns, educational events and other activities broadens support of prevention work. It would be helpful to include faculty engaged in interpersonal violence research and work outside of campus as it is an opportunity for the Campus Advocate to exercise a full campus approach inclusive of all stakeholders.

Working with Students

Engagement with students is essential to the work of Campus Advocates as students views them as resources and allies in responding to interpersonal violence. Therefore, it is important to have a skillful approach in how to engage and work with students on campus. There are five areas to consider in working with students: (1) working with formal and informal student leaders, (2) working with diverse student groups, (3) encouraging students to own interpersonal violence solutions on campus, (4) partnering with student groups, and (5) supporting student decision-making.

Figure 5: Working with Students



Campus advocates should work diligently to build relationships with student leaders to engage and acquire their perspectives on some of the challenges with addressing interpersonal violence on campus as well as potential solutions. In addition to engaging formal student leaders, it is also important to identify those informal leaders on campus. Tracking social media might help to identify influential informal student leaders.

In addition, connecting with formal and informal student leaders may attract student organizations. Engagement with these organizations should include partnering with them on student events, supporting them when they lead events that are interpersonal violence, those that may not be interpersonal violence related, as well as provide opportunities to participate in decision-making around interpersonal violence solutions on campus. For example, discussing student programming with student leaders and organizations may ensure that they are relevant and viewed as important to the work on campus. Having student retreats or student listening sessions may safeguard student voices as being part of some of the strategies used to help students begin to own the issue of IPV on campus.

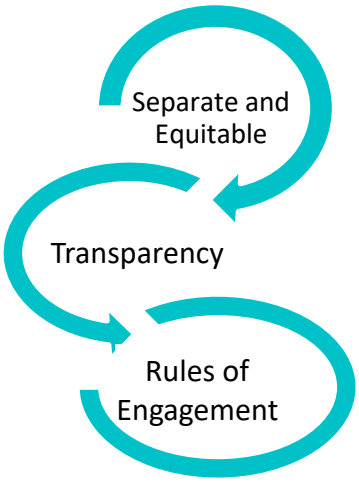
Campus advocates can also help student organizations to secure trusted off-campus community partners to participate in events and help to build connections with other offices as a part of relationship building. Relationship building with students is a process, something to continuously work towards for Campus Advocates.

Each year Campus Advocates are working to build relationships with students because leadership and ideas are changing. The campus advocate must be able and willing to connect with and change with those students. Therefore, it should not be assumed that because there have been good relationships in a prior year that there will continue to be good student relationships in a following year.

Working with Title IX

The relationship between the Campus Advocate and the Title IX Office is significant for the campus community. It is important for there to be a solid working relationship between the compliance arm and the advocacy arm on campus. Key areas to focus on between these two offices include: (1) being separate and equal, (2) transparency, and (3) having rules of engagement.

Figure 6: Campus Advocate Working with Title IX



The relationship between the Campus Advocate and the Title IX Officer should one of mutual respect and understanding what each office brings to ensure the safety of students on campus. The Title IX Office and the Campus Advocate Program should be separate. Students may not be willing to engage a Campus Advocate housed in the Title IX Office because of its compliance focus. The student's perception of Title IX could very well determine their willingness to report and to involve Campus Advocates which could, in turn, reduce reporting. Therefore, it is important for these two offices to be distinct and separate from each other.

However, they should also be viewed as equal in that compliance is not more important than advocacy. If the Campus Advocate is seen as someone who has no authority, students may not feel like they have the influence needed at the table to make decisions on their behalf, ensure that students can fully express their experiences and feel comfortable. Knowing that Campus Advocates have power and can be a viable voice for them on campus is notable.

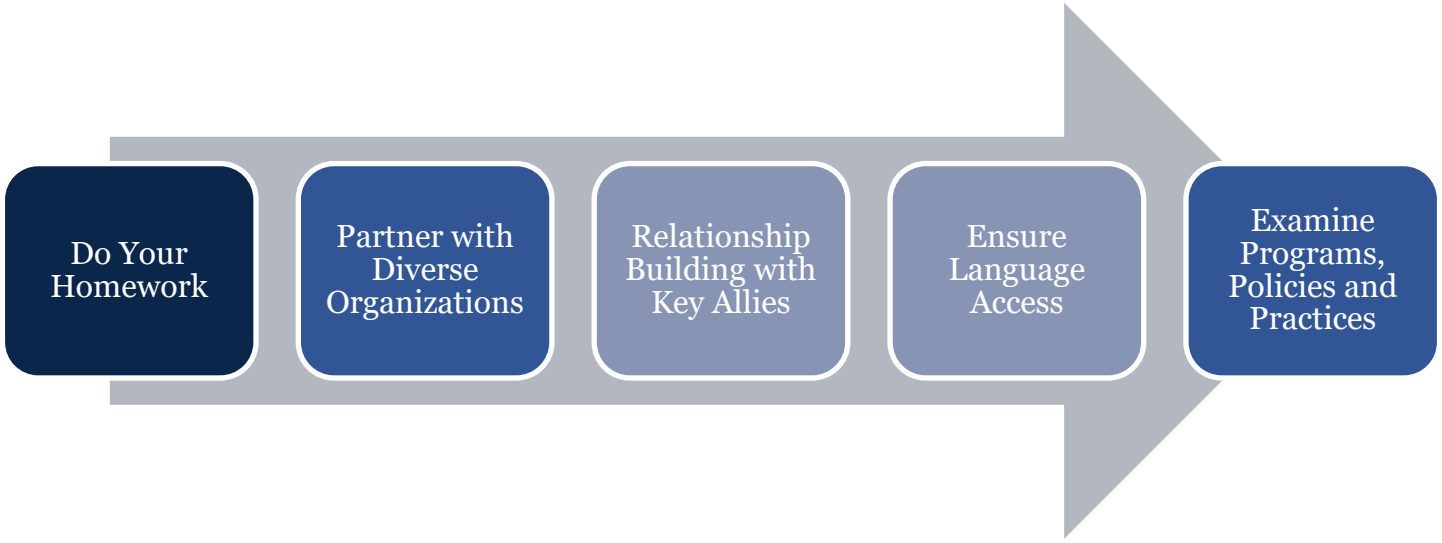
It is also important for these two offices to work together in a way that is transparent. If it is unclear how the two offices work together, that can also create a negative perception of Campus Victim Services or the Campus Advocate. Therefore, be clear with students about how the two offices work together. For example, if both offices are speaking at an event, it should be clear how compliance and advocacy are different and how the two offices work together so that it builds trust in the systems on campus.

In creating transparency, the Campus Advocate and Title IX Officer should have rules of engagement. It should be understandably clear, throughout the whole campus, how the two offices collaborate harmoniously with each other. For example, there should be a system established regarding reporting and data sharing. Campus Advocates cannot share the names of students that they see in confidence with the Title IX Office. However, they can share the number of students that reported having experienced different forms of interpersonal violence on campus. This helps the Title IX Office to have a better sense of what is happening on campus allowing them to be more effective in the work that they are doing. It also helps them to understand how students view reporting on campus which is critical for both the Campus Advocate and the Title IX Officer. If students do not feel comfortable reporting to the Office of Title IX, this can be identified when they can freely report to Campus Advocates trusting that their reports will be kept confidential. The Campus Advocate can share this resistance with the Office of Title IX hoping that changes can be made for the betterment of the students and the campus. Having a sense of these rules of engagement help to better support work on campus and creates a safer campus because the lines of communication are clear, the process is transparent, and students can feel confident that their Campus Advocates have a voice that represents them at the table.

Implementing Cultural Responsiveness

Embedded with these topics is the importance of cultural responsiveness. To do any of this work successfully on campus, there must be an intentional focus on showing cultural humility and being culturally responsive and knowledgeable about the distinct groups that are on a college campus. Campus advocates are required to (1) do their own homework, (2) partner with diverse organizations, (3) build relationships with key allies, (4) ensure language access, and (5) examine programs, policies, and practices.

Figure 7: Cultural Responsiveness



Campus advocates are to do their own homework, prior to engaging students, as opposed to relying on students to explain their cultural experience. This first step is important because students from diverse experiences should not have the responsibility of teaching the campus advocate about their experience. Instead, there should be an opportunity for discussion as opposed to having to fully educate someone about their experience. Campus advocates can gauge knowledgeable faculty as a part of growing their understanding as well as attending trainings and workshops that help them strengthen their response related to culture.

As a reminder, cultural responsiveness is not limited to race and ethnicity but encompasses the diverse perspectives and experiences on the college campus.

It is acceptable for Campus Advocates to know who is on the campus. If there is a group of students that is not coming for services, this is because there has not been a culturally specific level of engagement. Therefore, it is important for Campus Advocates to identify the different voices and experiences on campus and then educate themselves as to how to best support diverse groups of students prior to engagement.

One way of continuing to learn about these student groups is to engage in relationship building with diverse student organizations. By attending these organizational events, Campus Victim Services Advocates have an opportunity to listen and learn directly from students while building relationships with the organizations. It is important to not just attend Campus Victim Services related events but to get to personally know student experiences as members of their cultural groups. For example, if graduate and professional students are hosting an event discussing their experiences on campus, it is important for Campus Advocates to attend those events to be able to listen and learn about this group of students' unique experiences, barriers, challenges, and opportunities to provide support. Just being present is an important way to show that a Campus Advocate wants to build a relationship.

In addition to building relationships with student organizations, Campus Advocates are to build relationships with other key organizational allies in the community. Cultural groups within the community can be an important gateway to learning more about the diverse cultures on your campus and building credibility. Focusing on building relationships with these entities is an important and useful way to strengthen cultural responsiveness, build cultural humility and increase cultural knowledge.

As relationship building ensues, there should also be examination and exploration of language access. This is important to consider if language access presents challenges for students, and, if so, it should be determined how the Campus Advocate will address this element. Language is not only oral communication, but also written documentation. Consider how websites, flyers, social media posts and other documents represent diverse experiences on campus to demonstrate value, awareness, and a determination to meet the needs of these diverse groups.

Finally, there should be a thorough examination of campus policies, programs, procedures, and practices to ensure that there is not disproportionate inequity of any student group and that students are treated with impartiality and fairness regardless of their background or cultural experience.

SUMMARY

Building campus partnerships is central to the success of Campus Victim Services or Campus Advocates. The Campus Advocate is conscientious, engaged in the life of the campus, and knowledgeable about its mission, history, and contemporary experiences. The focus on campus partnerships never ends. It requires a long-term commitment and an earnest desire to build strong relationships. While you may not always agree, having open communication and a willingness to learn from each other will make your campus coordination stronger. It takes consistency, persistence, and the ability to not personalize challenges, but to instead embrace them for the betterment of your students and your campus.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are a list of questions and responses that some Campus Advocates have asked related to how to build or strengthen campus partnerships. These responses offer a brief explanation but can be expanded upon during Technical Assistance meetings with OVW Campus TA Providers.

Question: How can you increase staff referrals to better connect with students?
Collaborating with staff to increase referrals is particularly important. Therefore, Campus Advocates should meet with key staff or key offices where staff referrals can take place. There should be a conscious effort to regularly communicate with these key individuals/offices to ensure visibility of the Campus Advocate and to reinforce how working together can help the student and support the staff member as well. Simultaneously, it is important for the campus advocate to build direct communication lines with students and student organizations. This allows the advocate to not have to rely only on staff referrals to build better connections with students.

Question: How do you get active student involvement (i.e., attending trainings and events on campus)?
Campus Advocates should attend student events as an attendee and just be present at their events. The more this occurs the better the Campus Advocate understands student's voices and issues from their perspective and can tailor programming. In addition, being present creates visibility and builds relationships without the Campus Advocate having to be the expert but instead to be in a learning position with students. Campus Advocates should also be proficient with the use of social media to enhance awareness and build connections with students. Also, the Campus Advocate can tie activities into classroom experiences by collaborating with faculty on assignments and experiential learning opportunities.

Question: How can you get active participation when campus implementation is minimal?
Engage key faculty and staff in campus awareness campaigns. Feature these faculty and staff in bystander education initiatives to create a buzz on campus. Rethink what you view as campus implementation. It might be helpful to do a mix of virtual and in-person events. Campus implementation does not always have to involve in-person activities. For example, a Campus Advocate can collaborate with a student group or the University Communication's Team to create a YouTube channel to deliver content in an interesting and fun way while working with student groups to help share the content. In addition, Twitter Chats can be a helpful way to encourage active participation and can be done in partnership with a class to help fuel involvement.

Question: What is the added value of student involvement?
By having strong student involvement, the Campus Advocate can offer more effective programming and develop more effective interventions. In addition, student involvement allows the campus advocate to have better knowledge of what is happening on campus in real time. This can help anticipate or prevent problems, allowing the campus to be more initiative-taking and to get ahead of issues before they occur. Ultimately, having student involvement leads to Campus Advocates being able to help more students, have a healthier campus, and promote the potential for recruiting future students.

Question: How do you increase buy-in across student affairs and academic affairs and educate faculty who could have an impact on a student experiencing violence?
Having face time directly with staff and faculty is key to creating buy-in. As difficult as it may be, offering training sessions face-to-face will provide an opportunity for staff and faculty to better understand how their work connects to the issue and why it is important for them and the campus.

It is essential for the Campus Advocate to show these stakeholders how their work benefits faculty and staff. This is a place where providing data from the campus climate check could also be useful because it provides further quantitative evidence as to the importance of campus advocacy initiative and the fact that staff and faculty are often connecting with students and either missing opportunities to help them or potentially making it worse.

Most staff and faculty want to help students and so being able to help connect their interests and their understanding furthers buy-in. You can have faculty speak on their research in this area to broaden support. Another way to help to strengthen support is to meet with key staff and have tabletop discussions based on what may have occurred at another campus or develop scenarios that helps you better understand how vital the role is of staff and faculty. Such tabletop discussions could also be done with executive leadership to help increase their buy-in and, in turn, create more opportunities to connect with faculty and staff.

In short, helping student affairs officials better understand the gap you are filling and how that helps them is extremely important. In terms of academic affairs, being able to clearly identify how interpersonal violence issues impacts students academically. And in terms of graduation and retention rates, creates an opportunity for more dialogue and buy-in from this group. For faculty, being specific as to how they can be helpful is important and providing them with language either for syllabi or making referrals is particularly important for them. Finally, be consistent and never stop creating opportunities for discussion and relationship building with these key stakeholders.

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